



PRESIDENT'S PODIUM



Pain and misery are not subtle. They have a way of grabbing our attention and not easily letting go. I remember, as a teacher, I had a habit of putting pain and misery directly in front of my desk. Their names frequently started with a "J." Jason and Jon were one such example. Day in and day out my focus was on them. It got so bad that I even started carrying pain and misery with me wherever I went. Not physically, of course but certainly emotionally. Jason and Jon would come to the staffroom with me and I would share horror stories with every cohort who dared sit next to me. After all, misery loves company. I would take them home with me and discuss them with Jerith over the dinner table. Her eyes would eventually just glaze over. One day she finally said, "Was there nothing joyful in your life today?" I had to think about that for quite some time. It made me realize that joy is a subtle thing. While pain and misery are dancing in front of us, joy quietly sits in the background waiting patiently to be noticed. Tim Hansel said, "Pain is inevitable, but misery is optional. We cannot avoid pain, but we can avoid joy."

I encourage each of you to get out there and hunt joy down. Once you find it, share it with your family, with your friends. Here is a hint: it hides in plain sight. (A cashier opening a new checkout lane... the first scoop out of a jar of peanut butter... sweatpants... solving the Wheel of Fortune puzzle before the people on the show do... scraping all the lint off an overflowing lint trap... the man couch... remember how lucky we are to be here right now.)

The Christmas season is right around the corner, and Bruce has many of you thinking about your favourite memories. Many things will be different this year. The gatherings will be smaller. The festivities will be less. Traditional travel plans may be doubtful. However, there will still be a decorated pine tree of some sort inside your home. Your freezer will contain an assortment of not-frequently-seen goodies. Best of all, your refrigerator will be filled to capacity with leftovers. So many wonderful leftovers. I know I will find myself going to the refrigerator door and opening it just to marvel at all the food. Jerith will see me standing there and shout, "You can't be hungry, you just ate!" I will smile joyfully to myself, lean in a little closer to the leftovers and whisper, "I found you, you subtle Son of a Gun, I found you."

Joy to the World!

- President Miles Jones



DECEMBER BIRTHDAYS

01	David Oakes	19	Jerith Jones
12	Carol Hockenhull	20	Gordon Hutton
13	Suzanne Linnell	21	Michael Lynch
13	Valerie Mowatt	25	Ellen Bechard
16	Val Dyke	26	Blair Deering
16	Lorraine Weir	27	Ian Pratt

MILESTONES

John and Robyn Dickinson joined Orca Probus on December 27, 2015.
Congratulations on five years of fun!

The Garden Club coordinators for next year will be Barb Wilson and Judy Chrysler.

With the current Covid restrictions, the Hiking outings will be curtailed until spring.

At the most recent Management Committee meeting, it was decided to forego all fees until next September. At that time, if we are still in restrictions, all the members will be asked if they wish to continue.



There is a national Probus Newsletter. Just go on the internet and look up Probus Canada Newsletter. See what the rest of the clubs in the country are doing.

Next Meeting

The speaker at our December 8 Club meeting will be Amanda Hale, a Hornby Island author. She will discuss her newest book called 'Mad Hatter', a novel which contains a great deal of memoir concerning her family in World War II England. Amanda will explain how she came about to write this novel and will read excerpts from it.

Amanda Hale has published four novels, two poetry books, and two collections of stories set in the Cuban town of Baracoa. She won the Prism International prize for creative non-fiction for 'The Death of Pedro Iván', and has twice been a finalist for the prestigious Relit Fiction award. Her latest novel, 'Mad Hatter', is a WWII story, a fictionalized version of her own family's wartime experience following the internment of her father.

We will send you details on how to connect to this Zoom meeting, which will begin at 2:00 pm on Tuesday, December 8th.

As we all know, fellow member Rose Jacobson celebrated her 100th birthday last week. Unfortunately, we were unable to sing Happy Birthday to her. However, two years ago when she turned 98, it happened to occur on the "Singers and Friends" evening, so those present with the Undecideds got to sing Happy Birthday to her that night. I hope she remembers.



Stories From Christmas Past

Just a few of the stories submitted by our members

My parents were Dutch immigrants. Hundreds of thousands of Dutch citizens left The Netherlands after the war, and scattered all over the globe. Mom had just turned 20 when she boarded a ship sailing for Halifax, leaving her whole family behind. Every December, Mom received a gift box from her family, ideally mailed to arrive at Sinterklaas (December 6th). We were always so excited as the package was unwrapped, revealing all the typical Dutch Sinterklaas and Christmas treats.

Anything you might now find at Runge's Deli was in the small 12x12 metal tin. A Dutch organization called *Wereld Contact* took the initiative to organize and send these boxes around the world to those Dutch families who were missing their loved ones during the Christmas season. It was wonderful!

- Evelyn Keith

It was the 13th Christmas of my life – the year I learned about compassion.

My Mother's sister had died earlier that year of leukemia. She left behind a brand new baby, two other small children and a husband who was severely crippled by the polio epidemic of the 50's.

During the following year year, he met and married another woman from his church. Yes, it was a bit fast and somewhat hard for the entire family to accept, but our family invited the couple to come and share our Family Christmas.

I watched when my "new" aunt arrived and was struck by how nervous she was. A whole house full of strangers – people who had known and loved her husband's first wife. How hard that must have been.

My cousin and I felt her distress, and we decided to try and make her feel welcome. Quite a step for two teenagers. Recognizing her feelings, and taking action to help her was truly by the definition of the word – compassion.

We learned a valuable life lesson that Christmas and it was one of the best gifts ever.

- Carol LaBine

I was 9 years old and we were living in a small home in North Regina. The day before Christmas we were surprised to see Dad building a large table in the middle of our small living room. I asked him what it was for and he said for Christmas dinner. He even had my brother and I practice reaching for turkey and stuffing to make sure we could stretch.

Christmas morning we came out to find a fully set-up Lionel train tacked on the table, with station and other buildings. My brother and I had to be forced to leave it alone and open our other gifts. The table was later moved to our bedroom.

- Bruce Ellis

Let me take you back to 1956, when I was 11 years old. It was December and we had been transferred to Montreal the previous summer from Victoria, as my Dad was to be an instructor at the Naval School Hochelaga.

As Christmas drew near, Dad saw the price of Christmas trees in Quebec and exclaimed, "We won't be having one, at \$10.00 a tree, because we used to get our trees free from your Grandparents' farm in Victoria". With this thought in mind and without discussion, my brother and I each pleaded for our class Christmas tree at the school break, and we were both successful. He and I both showed up at home with a tree the same day, and so did our Dad! Three trees for Christmas!

- Tim Ackerman

I once had a dog named Pepper. Over the years, she ate a LOT of things she was not supposed to.

One Christmas, 6 family members arrived on the 24th to spend Christmas with us. We took out two hams to thaw, and left them in the sink in the kitchen while we all went for a walk. Imagine my surprise when we returned from our walk to find only one ham left! Soon, one couple came out to the kitchen to say "Hey! Your dog's thrown up in our bedroom!!!" And.....the hunt was on! Where was Pepper? Where was the ham? Where was the ham bone??? Of course, Christmas Eve, no vet was open. What do you do with a dog who has eaten an entire ham???

The dog was duly found and dosed to make her regurgitate (ask me how much fun THAT was!!!!) The ham bone was duly found hidden behind a potted house plant that she had tried to dig into to bury the bone. We ordered pizza for dinner, and Pepper was forever known as "Pepper Hambone Judson!!!"

- Anne Judson

I was spoiled with gifts at Xmas when I was a child. My relatives back east used to mail boxes of wrapped gifts early - to avoid the postal rush - and my mom used to hide them in plain sight in the top of her closet.

One year, I decided I wanted to know what I was getting before Xmas, so I carefully unwrapped each gift and rewrapped them so no one would notice. I learned several different styles of wrapping, folding, which tape tears paper and which peels off, pattern matching, and just general sneakiness. Those who know my affinity for paper and paper-based crafts will see that this may have been the origin of my paper fondness. At any rate, it was a Bah Humbug Xmas that year as I unwrapped my "surprise" gifts, and I never did that again.

- Cricket Price

It was a cold, snowy Saskatchewan night, and I was sitting at the living room piano. I was only 4 so I tended to create rather than follow. Deep into full blown creation, I suddenly heard a tapping at the living room window!

I turned to see a white bearded face with a big red hat smiling at me and waving. I was stunned, excited and couldn't believe my eyes. There was Santa Claus right in my living room window!! My older sister had just walked into the room and saw the face too. I instantly turned into my detective mode and immediately wanted to head outside to catch him.

What could be better than to actually hug him and tell him I was so happy he'd come! My sister very quickly told me that she should be the one to head outside and do the groundwork so as I always did as I was told - sometimes. I let her go. A few minutes later she was back to say that she had just seen him flying away. Needless to say, I was extremely disappointed. Still determined, I grabbed my coat and actually saw the footprints in the snow walking off and then disappearing in the neighbour's driveway. Aha!!! That had to be Santa then, and he'd parked his sleigh in the neighbour's driveway. That experienced lasted in my memory for years until in Grade 2, dear Linda Sable revealed to me that there was no Santa. Horrors!! That couldn't be. I rushed home and quizzed my sister mercilessly and pointed out that we both had seen him. After lengthy interrogation the truth finally came out. Needless to say it was a sad day. But as the years have passed I still think back to that snowy cold night and a little girl sitting at her piano bench creating and with great joy seeing her Christmas Santa in the window. I smile when I think of it.

- Bev Oulette

December 1972, Tim and I lived in West Vancouver. We had Canuck hockey tickets so we were attending a game. My dear mum Nonie was visiting for the weekend, but did not come with us, so stayed at the apartment.

We came home to find our tree looking rather different. Nonie had become cold so she had reached for the thermostat, which was behind the tree that was perched on the corner table, and she inadvertently knocked the tree over, with all its decorations flying to the ground.

She did the best she could to redecorate the poor thing, but she was just so mad at herself, our dear 62-year-old woman. We just laughed it off, but the story has been retold for 48 years!

I can hear her now, "I'm glad you have found this funny all these years!"

- Jill Ackerman

For a few years in a row, Margo and I and our two boys headed off to the Rockies for a Ski Christmas, packing a smaller tree, lights, and gifts to put up at the Hotel. We would go a few days before Christmas, ski, especially on Christmas Day, when the hills were empty, and head home on Boxing Day, when the hills were packed.

One of my favourite memories was having Christmas dinner at the Banff Springs Hotel, a big splurge, and having the turkey and the Christmas pudding piped in on the shoulders of the staff, accompanied by the King and Queen of Christmas.

- Paul Ellegood

I have the usual memories of Christmas with lots of excitement and anticipation about Christmas morning. One year at the age of 12, I decided to snoop, and found the stash of unwrapped gifts. I noted the ones I had requested from 'Santa'. On Christmas morning I had to feign surprise and joy while guiltily unwrapping each gift. I decided to never snoop at Christmas again.

The most memorable Christmas with our family of six involved my brother, age 14, and me, age 13, each being handed a wrapped gift at the same time. As he opened the book about "Sex and Puberty for Boys", and I opened "Sex and Puberty for Girls", our faces turned redder than Rudolph's nose. That was the extent of 'the talk'. Very memorable indeed.

- Marguerite Ancell

In 1994, following a storybook skiing trip to Silver Star, our family spent Christmas with Bruce's brother's family and his Mother in Delta. Having gone to Midnight Mass the previous night, we were still up early to check out our Stockings, and then open our presents. When I opened the neatly-wrapped gift from my husband, I found myself staring at a box labelled Kenmore Electric Can Opener. Our daughters, watching closely, scolded, "DAAAD!" Meanwhile, my brother-in-law asked, "Gee, is that the one with the built-in knife sharpener? Let's see that baby."

So I opened the box ... to find a gold watch sitting on top of the opener.
Redemption for Bruce!

Meanwhile, my sister-in-law was just opening her large gift from her hubby, and the word "Garburator" were slowly revealed as she stripped away the wrapping paper. "There had better be jewelry in here, Blaine!" she warned.

There was.
- Pat Ellis

We grew up in a small town in Northern Manitoba. Every year, as many of us as could, returned home to spend Christmas with our parents and siblings. Music was very important in our family. We spent a lot of time gathered around the piano, singing and laughing.

On Christmas Eve our favourite thing to do was to attend the midnight church service. One year my Dad and I and only one of my sisters went. We sang the usual carols, passed the "peace" among many friends and neighbours, and finally finished by lighting candles and singing "Silent Night".

As we walked home through the cold, crunchy snow, we all joined arms, my Dad in the middle and his girls on either side. It was a cold, clear night. The stars were shining brightly. My father started to sing "O Holy Night", and we both joined in. As we slowly walked home, arm in arm, we saw a beautiful shiny falling star.

My father is gone now but that Christmas memory has never faded. In my heart, the three of us are still walking, singing and marvelling at the beauty in our world.
- Jerith Jones

Christmas Decorations and Crafts



Jerith Jones has been busy during Covid making these wonderful stockings for her grandkids.
Hope she can share Christmas with them.



Karen Ross cherishes this Glass Santa ornament brought over by her family from England in 1910. The last of the set.

One of my favourite Christmas decorations.
A 'major award', don't you know!



BOWLING

DATE: THURSDAY, DECEMBER 17, 2020

TIME: 1:00 PM
(as always please arrive by 12:45 pm in order to pick up your shoes and stretch)

LOCATION: CODES COUNTRY LANES – 307, 6TH STREET,
COURTENAY

COST: \$11.55/person (includes 2 games; shoe rental; taxes)
CASH ONLY PLEASE

AFTER DECEMBER 7 WHEN DR. HENRY IS SCHEDULED TO REVIEW OUR COVID RESTRICTIONS ONCE AGAIN, I WILL ADVISE IF THE BOWLING IS CONTINUING.

Many thanks.

- Marie Knowles marieknowles@shaw.ca

